

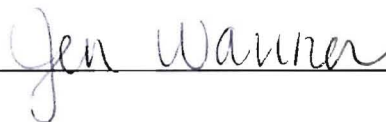
Survivor's Guide For Entering the "Real World"

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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Abstract

Transitioning from college to the workforce can be an eye-opener for many graduates. While college provides students with a vast amount of knowledge and education, there are many aspects that cannot be taught in the classroom. The following topics include advice and tips on situations college graduates might face in their career. The topics include appropriate clothing to wear for both professional and business casual situations, proper dining etiquette, how to improve small talk skills, the importance of sleep, and suggestions on maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

Acknowledgements

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SURVIVOR'S GUIDE

For Entering the “Real World”



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[1 Dress to Impress]

It takes fifteen seconds to form a first impression. Appearance can be the most important part of this first impression. Therefore, it crucial for you to portray the right message about yourself and the organization you are representing by wearing the appropriate attire.

Of course, appropriate dress attire differs from field to field. Many career fields such as accounting, law, and finance tend to be more conservative. While career fields such as fashion design or art allow for a more creative expression. If possible, do a little research to find out what is appropriate for your current situation. However, it is always safer to err on the side of conservatism.

No matter what career field you choose, the following basic guidelines can be used by both men and women:

- clean and polished conservative dress shoes
- well-groomed hairstyle
- cleaned and trimmed fingernails
- minimal cologne or perfume
- no visible body piercing beyond conservative ear piercing for women
- well-brushed teeth and fresh breath
- no gum, candy, or other objects in your mouth
- minimal jewelry

For simplicity sake, appropriate attire discussed on the following pages will be based on a conservative career field.

Women

Professional



Building your wardrobe around a neutral color is a great way to diversify your wardrobe without spending a ton of money. Purchase items of clothing that can be mixed and matched with other garments. Some good neutral colors include navy, charcoal gray, black, khaki or olive. A suit or tailored dress is the most professional attire. Investing in a conservative classic style is a good idea because it can be used in an interview and many other professional settings. If wearing a skirt, pantyhose are a must. Accessories can be added to an outfit, however, be careful not to overdo it. Avoid dangling earrings, multiple earrings, and noisy bracelets. When applying makeup, go for a more natural look to enhance your appearance.

Women

Business Casual



Business casual clothing seems endless for women. However, be careful not to confuse club attire with business attire. Slacks or skirts are appropriate, just make sure skirts are no shorter than right above the knee. Neither should be tight fitting. Shirts, blouses, and tailored knit sweaters and sweater sets are appropriate. Keep jewelry and accessories simple and avoid extreme colors and styles. Makeup should again be kept natural. Pantyhose are not essential but recommended for knee length skirts.

Men

Professional



Men can choose between a single-breasted style (conservative) or a double-breasted style (trendy). The best choice in colors are black, navy, or charcoal gray. White and light blue are recommended for interviews while other shirts could be worn for less conservative situations. A tie is a must for a professional setting. Be careful of ties that are too flashy. It is better to stick with a more conservative tie to make sure you are keeping the attention on you and not on your outfit. If you are just starting your career and a little short on money buy shirt and tie combinations that can be match clothes you already have or go well with multiple shirts or ties. Jewelry should be kept to a minimum: watches, wedding bands, and conservative men's rings. Everything else should be taken off or out.

Men

Business Casual



Business casual should be neat, crisp, and look appropriate for a chance meeting with the CEO. Ties are not required but can add a personal touch. Long-sleeved shirts are dressier than short-sleeved, but weather can play a determining role in the decision.

Polo shirts should be tucked in and are considered the most casual. Khakis and corduroys are good choices for slacks, however be wary of cargo pants and khakis that are too casual. Shoes should always be polished and clean. Jewelry should still be kept to a minimum, and when in doubt don't wear it.



[2 Dining Etiquette]

There may come a time in your professional life when dinner is involved. Whether it is an interview, meeting with a client, or a work party, no matter the occasion it is important to be equipped with a few basic guidelines on dining etiquette.

The Napkin.

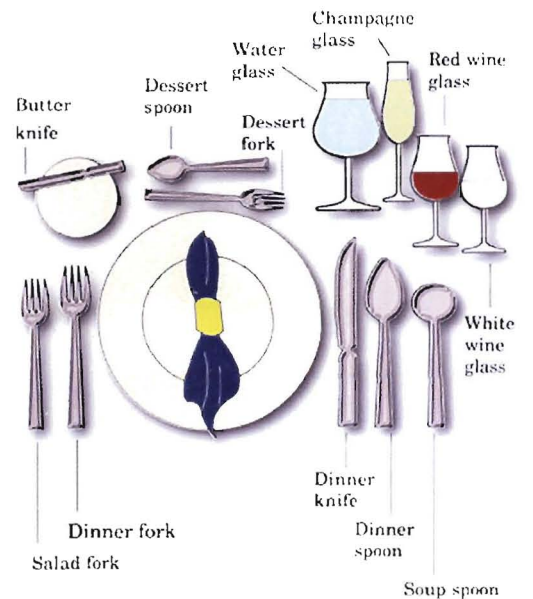
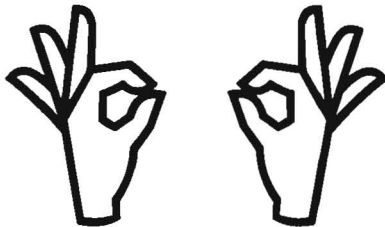
While the napkin may seem to play a minor role in the whole scheme of dinner, the meal begins when the host unfolds his or her napkin. Your napkin should then be placed in your lap and remain there throughout the meal. If it is a larger dinner napkin, then fold the napkin in half with the crease facing you. When needed, the napkin should be used to blot the mouth. If you should have to leave the table, place the napkin on the table to the left of your plate. However, do not fold or wad up the napkin. Again, the host will place his or her napkin on the table to signal the end of the meal. Once everyone is finished, the napkin should then be placed on the table to the right of your dinner plate.

Ordering.

This can be intimidating in a professional setting. The best piece of advice to remember: don't order the most expensive item on the menu, and don't order unfamiliar food or food that will be difficult to eat during conversation. As a guest, you should not order the most expensive item on the menu, unless the host indicates otherwise. For example, if the host suggests an expensive dish then it would be appropriate to order that dish or one of equal price. Finger foods and messy foods should be avoided. A good rule of thumb is to order foods that can be eaten with a knife and a fork. Be sure to ask your server questions if you are unsure about a certain item. It is better to know what you are ordering than to pick tentatively at a meal you do not like.

The Place Setting.

When dining at a more formal restaurant, a recent college grad might feel a little out of place. The number of plates, silverware, and glasses can look like to a jigsaw puzzle to an untrained eye. However, when broken down, the place setting is not as intimidating as it looks. The first step is to figure out what is yours. Remember, solids (bread) on the left and liquids (drinks) on the right. If you have a hard time remembering, here is a little trick. Hold both hands in front of you, palms facing each other. Using the tips of your thumb and forefinger, make circles on each hand. The remaining three fingers in each hand point upwards. Your left hand will form a "b" and your right hand will form a "d". Bread (b) is on the left, and drink (d) is on the right. You may also see multiple utensils in various sizes. Always start with the knife, fork, or spoon farthest from your plate and work your way in, using only one for each course.



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A Few Other Points to Remember:

- To show you are finished with your meal, lay your fork and knife diagonally or horizontally across your place. They should be side by side with the sharp edge of the knife facing towards you and fork tines down.
- Once a piece of silverware is used it should never be placed directly on the table. The resting position for a knife is horizontally across the top of the plate. The fork can rest anywhere on the plate with the tines up.
- It is not appropriate to ask for a take home box in a professional setting.
- Always pass the salt and pepper together, even if only one was asked for.
- When passing a food item around a table, you should first offer it to the person on your left, help yourself, and then pass it to the right.
- Do not season your food before tasting it.
- Avoid ordering alcoholic beverages.
- Keep elbows off the table. The only time it is acceptable is in between courses.
- Spoon soup away from you and sip it from the side of the spoon. No slurping or blowing on your soup. If it is too warm, stir it or wait for it to cool.
- Bread and rolls should be eaten by tearing off a piece and buttering it.

[Small Talk 101]

A study at the Stanford University School of Business tracked a group of MBAs 10 years after they graduated. The result? Grade point averages had no bearing on their success, but their ability to converse with others did. While most people dread the idea of small talk and trying to make conversation with people they do not know, it is an important part of the professional world.

First and foremost, start with a positive attitude. Your attitude can read across your face and affect how people feel towards you and around you. Before you enter the room, take a deep breath and relax. You want to appear calm, confident, and composed, even if you aren't. When introducing yourself, make sure to say your name and a detail about yourself to relate to the person and the situation. If nametags are worn at an event, make sure to wear yours on the right side. This way when you shake someone's hand you are putting your name out there as well and it is easier to be read.

When engaging in small talk, it is important to steer clear of dark, serious, and controversial topics. It is called small talk for a reason, so keep it small. Reading the newspaper and keeping up to date on current events is a great way to create conversation. Read the sports section, even if you do not enjoy sports. If others are interested in a certain team or sporting event, then you will be more prepared to talk. At least you will know something, even if it isn't a lot. When at a work-related event, talking shop is a great way to start a conversation.

When leaving a conversation, make your exit graceful and simple. Always make sure to thank the host or organizer of the event before you leave. Take the initiative to find him or her, smile, shake hands, and say goodbye. Leave with the same confidence and composure as when you arrived.

12 Tips For Making Small Talk

1. As you prepare for a function, come up with three things to talk about as well as four generic questions that will get others talking. If you've met the host before, try to remember things about her, such as her passion for a sport or a charity in which you're both involved.
2. Develop a host mentality and be the first to say "hello." If you're not sure the other person will remember you, offer your name to ease the pressure. For example, "Charles Bartlett? Lynn Schmidt... good to see you again." Smile first and always shake hands when you meet someone.
3. Take your time during introductions. Make an extra effort to remember names and use them frequently. Repeating a person's name will help you commit it to memory.
4. Get the other person talking by leading with a common ground statement regarding the event or location and then asking a related open-ended question. For example, "Attendance looks higher than last year, how long have you been coming to these conventions?" You can also ask them about their trip in or how they know the host. Try to avoid close ended questions that can be answered with "yes" or "no." This will keep conversation moving.
5. Stay focused on your conversational partner by actively listening and giving feedback. Maintain eye contact. Never glance around the room while they are talking to you.
6. Listen more than you talk.
7. Have something interesting to contribute. Keeping abreast of current events and culture will provide you with great conversation builders, leading with "What do you think of...?" Have you heard...?" What is your take on...?" Stay away from negative or controversial topics, and refrain from long-winded stories or giving a lot of detail in casual conversation.
8. If there are people you especially want to meet, one of the best ways to approach them is to be introduced by someone they respect. Ask a mutual friend to do the honors.
9. If someone hands you a business card, accept it as a gift. Hold it in both hands and take a moment to read what is written on it. When you're done, put it away in a shirt pocket, purse or wallet to show it is valued.
10. Watch your body language. People who look ill at ease make others uncomfortable. Act confident and comfortable, even when you're not.
11. Before entering into a conversation that's already in progress, observe and listen. You don't want to squash the dynamics with an unsuited or ill-timed remark.
12. Have a few exit lines ready, so that you can both gracefully move on. For example, "I need to check in with a client over there," "I skipped lunch today, so I need to visit the buffet," or you can refresh your drink.

[4 Importance of Sleep]

Say goodbye to late night television and daytime napping. Getting a good night's rest is important when faced with eight hours a day of work. According to the National Sleep Foundation, sleep is essential for a person's health and well-being. In general, you should try to get an average of eight hours of sleep a night. Of course, there are some individuals who can function just as well on six hours or may need up to ten hours.

While asleep, the body and brain are busy performing numerous restorative processes. Sleeping is an important part of retaining memories and learning skills. And let's face it, if you are just beginning a job at a new place you will be learning a ton. Getting enough sleep is imperative to retain the amount of information coming your way. Sleep also plays an important role in building immunity. The immune system is strengthened in ways while you sleep that don't occur while you are awake.

If you aren't getting enough sleep on a regular basis you begin to build up a "sleep debt." The longer this occurs, the bigger the debt can become. The only way to pay off this debt is to sleep for longer periods of time. However, this can several days or even weeks to even begin to catch up. Chances are you are not going to have enough time to "catch up" on sleep so try to stay on top of it as much as possible.

Dr. Timothy Roehrs published one of the first studies to measure the effect of sleepiness on decision making. He found that sleepiness does take a toll on effective decision making. Dr. Roehrs paid fully alert and sleepy subjects to complete a series of tasks. At random times they were given the opportunity to take their money and stop, or they could continue on and possibly make more money or risk losing it all. Dr. Roehrs found that alert people were very sensitive to the amount of work they needed to finish the task and the risk of losing their money. But, the sleepy subjects either chose to quit early or risked losing money on tasks that were impossible to finish in the allotted time.

You may not be faced with very many large decisions when you first start working, however, it is important to be ready to make one at any time. How do you insure that you will get a good night's sleep? Bad news for all you snooze button junkies. Experts say that hitting the snooze alarm over and over again to wake up is not going to make you feel well rested. Fragmenting sleep in short intervals can cause shifts in brain-wave patterns, likely shortening your REM sleep and impairing mental functioning during the day.

What can you do to sleep better?

- Keep a regular sleep/wake schedule, even on weekends.
- Don't drink or eat caffeine four to six hours before bed.
- Get regular exercise.
- Avoid smoking around bedtime or if you awake in the night.
- Minimize noise, light, and excessive hot or cold temperatures where you sleep.
- Stay away from alcohol and heavy meals before sleep.

[5] Work-Life Balance]

Balancing a social life with a work life may come hard to some college graduates. Oftentimes people fall into an “all work and no play” attitude and feel as though they have to work themselves to death in order to prove their worth. Nobody wants to look like a slacker, especially when you first begin a job and are unfamiliar with expectations. However, creating an effective work-life balance may be crucial to your happiness in both your life and your job.

A work-life balance is not an equal balance between the two. Additionally, your work-life balance will vary over time depending on your situation and could even change on a daily basis. So the best way to find a successful work-life balance is to take a flexible approach. Jim Bird, the CEO of WorkLifeBalance.com, defines an effective work-life balance as “two key everyday concepts that relate to each of us: daily achievement and enjoyment.”

Too often we forget about ourselves. And when we finally do take some time for personal leisure, we may start to feel guilty. Don't let this happen to you. It is essential to take some time out for yourself every now and then. Taking some time for yourself can reduce the production of excess stress hormones and also gives you a greater value and balance in your life.

So what can you do to create work-life balance? For starters, you can use your lunch break as just that, a break. Go out and eat lunch with a friend without discussing work related matters. Or, if it's a nice day you can pack a lunch and find a nice place outside to eat. You could also use your lunch break for other activities, such as walking your dog or exercising, as time permits.

Don't bring work home with you unless it is absolutely necessary. After work hours could be hundreds of other ways including:

- Spend time with a loved one or friend.
- Join a gym. Take some of the recreational classes that so many gyms offer.
- Take an art class or photography class.
- Check out the local restaurants and shops in your town/city. Buy a local newspaper to stay up to date on current events and activities.
- Take dance lessons.

There are so many ways you can relieve stress and take some time for you. Find out what it is that you passionate about or do something you've always wanted to do. Whatever the activity may be, it will certainly help recharge your batteries for another day or week at the office and gives you something to look forward to doing.

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